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SPAIN

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I

SPAIN is a puzzle to Europe. It is torn internally by the class struggle, and engaged in a war in which all the Fascist states and their followers of all races and nationalities are participating. To Europe, Spain is a source of concern which the League of Nations is trying vainly to patch.

The war against the insurgent generals is only a new phase in the long process of her evolution. The misery of the masses and their urgent need for bread, freedom, and culture, and the revolutionary activity of the workers throughout Spain, were the main causes of the revolution. The conflict between the far reaching, social accomplishments of the workers and the growing opposition of the bourgeoisie against the social revolution, was the motive for the tragic events which took place during the first week of May, in Barcelona and other parts of Catalonia.

II

How did the Revolution develop?

In 1924 the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera was proclaimed. The king, clergy, big land-owners, military men, and industrial and commercial barons were behind him. The dictatorship was aimed at the workers movement, particularly against the syndicalist and anarchist wing, and the Socialists, Democrats, Republicans, and the Separatists. Those opposed to the dictatorship, from the moderate right to the extreme left, formed a united front against their common enemy. The structure of the dictatorship was undermined and it fell. And with it went the monarchy. The opponents of the dictatorship had achieved their aim. A republic was proclaimed. But they were not a homogeneous mass. They were united only against the dictatorship; therefore, there was soon dissension among them. The Basque Nationalists and Catalonians wanted autonomy; the Republican Militarists, a strong army; the Democrats, a democratic

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constitution; the Socialists aimed at hitching the workers movement to the State, under their control; and the Syndicalists, true to their anarchist traditions, wanted a social revolution.

The struggle between the various movements lasted five years. This internal conflict weakened the republic. Anti-republicans gathered their forces again. The Catholic church, the big landowners, the industrialists and the generals, lusting for a dictatorship, united to build a new reactionary front, whose aim was the establishment of a military dictatorship.

III

In 1936 a new turn was seen. The generals supported by clergy and foreign fascists, attempted, by a military uprising, to establish fascism. Once again the anti-fascist front was revived to fight the common enemy. On July 19th, workers, peasants, democrats, republicans, socialists, communists, syndicalists and anarchists, united in their fight against fascism. They defended themselves against their common enemy, which was endangering their liberties. Thanks to this united front the anti-fascists won the most important parts of the country, Madrid and Barcelona.

The extreme left movement of Catalonia, the anarchists and syndicalists, led the fight against the generals. In the vanguard was the FAI—Anarchist Federation of Iberia. Under its influence, the defensive against fascism developed into a process of social reconstruction. It was evident that the capitalists were allied with the fascist generals. A defeat of the fascist generals meant, the defeat of the capitalists. The Catalonian anarchists penetrated the province of Aragon to defeat the enemy and replace capitalism with collectivism. Collectivism, in Spain, is an old traditional principle of the anarchist school. The syndicalist trade unions were the initiators of collectivization. They took over the factories, transportation, commerce and all the public utilities. Public control, in Catalonia, was, in a large measure, in the hands of the syndicalist CNT and anarchist FAI.

However, Catalonia could not conduct the war against the fascists without the financial aid of the Madrid-Valencia government. The rebellion of the fascist generals developed into a war which has lasted a year and no end is in sight.

During this long war, the character of the struggle against fascism has altered. From street battles it developed into a modern war; the anti-fascist militia was transformed into a strictly military organization. After July 19, 1936, the State was very weak and the public functions were controlled by workers' organizations. But, in the course of the war, there was a change of control. The State again took up its old prerogatives. Control by the workers was constantly undermined. The bourgeoisie, who for months were intimidated again raised their voice. The workers fearing the loss of what they had achieved, were ready to defend their gains. They did not want to go back to the old capitalist republic. The anti-fascist struggle meant to them a war against capitalism, for socialism.

Combined with the temperament and traditions of the masses and the tension of the war, the different interpretations of the realities led inevitably to an inner conflict. Economic conditions grew worse. The war caused a scarcity of necessities and an increase in the cost of living. The Committee of Public Welfare, which has been, since December 1936, in the hands of the middle class (Republican Party), served the small shopkeepers. The interests of the workers were disregarded. Hatred was nursed, and led to a clash.

In addition to the social differences there were political ones. The political influence of the Anarchists and Syndicalists was too great a load for the bourgeoisie to carry. The four representatives of the CNT in the government also encountered difficulties. The Communist Party of Catalonia (PSUC) and the Communist-Socialist trade union UGT, threw in their lot with the bourgeois Republicans. In December, 1936, they eliminated the Workers Party of Marxist Unity (POUM) from the government, and they attempted to do the same with the Syndicalists. On March 27, there was a crisis in the government which lasted till April 16th. The immediate cause of this crisis was the issuance of a decree, divorcing the Workers Patrols from their political and trade union organizations. This aroused indignation in the CNT-FAI and brought on a crisis.

The political situation was not clarified. The apparent ideological differences were clearly discerned by the masses. On March 5th, members of the Communist Party succeeded through trickery to take 11 tanks from Barcelona to the Voroshilov armory. The tanks were probably intended for their adversaries in the united front. What were the intentions of the Communist Party? This was the outstanding question of the day.

The bourgeois parties started a campaign against collectivization of the land. In Spain, collectivization was not forced, as in Russia. Where the syndicates were in a majority, collectivization took place. In Fatarella (Catalonia) there was a bloody conflict between the members of the PSUC and the FAI. On the Catalonian-French border, which was guarded by the members of the FAI, there was an armed conflict between the Anarchists and the Estat Catala—Catalonian Nationalists. In April, a prominent communist was assassinated in Molin de Llabregat. This assassination was condemned by the FAI and CNT as well as by other parties. Several days later, the Anarchist mayor of the town of Puigcerda, Comrade Martin, and three other comrades were killed. The tension between the parties and organizations in the anti-fascist front grew. Negotiations between the CNT and the UGT, for a united May Day parade were dropped, for they did not ideologically understand each other any more. The united front of the workers was shattered. There existed, however, an ideological unity between those parties who stood for entrusting the State with all social and economic enterprises. But contrary to the latter, the CNT-FAI wanted the social and economic life of Spain in the hands of trade unions.

This was the process of development which led to the tragic events in the first week of May. The incidents are well known. The press of

the world reported them. The struggle ended in a compromise. The Communists lost one of their leaders, Sese, the secretary of the UGT. The Anarchists lost many of their militant leaders, among them Joaquin Ascaso and Camillo Berneri, the Italian anarchist and professor of philosophy.

The authoritarian parties of Catalonia wanted to call troops from Valencia. Thus they voluntarily renounced the privileges for which they fought for many years. In order to prevent profound revolutionary changes, they were ready to forego their hopes for an autonomous Catalonia.

The events in Catalonia were tragic and terrifying but apparently only a prelude to a new political line in Spain. "The instructions of Moscow were that the four anarchist Ministers, Garcia Oliver, Montseny, Peiro and Lopez, should be removed from the Government. This seems to be the main cause of the crisis in the government." These words were printed in Echo de Paris, at the end of May. In this manner, the communists hoped to direct anti-fascist Spain into other channels, so that social reconstruction would not develop further. The bourgeois parties and the moderate socialists united with the communists for a purely democratic line. This coalition was against fascism but not for a social revolution; against Italian and German intervention in Spain but with a strong leaning toward the western democracies and the Soviet Union. And the proletarian movement must be suppressed.

This new coalition found it hard to work with the CNT-FAI. As long as the latter remained in the government the new course could not be pursued. The coalition aimed to strengthen the State. What was now controlled by the workers was to be transferred to the State. This coalition wanted a government built along purely parliamentary lines with parliamentary parties. The revolutionary alliance of anti-fascist forces, which made up Caballero's government, was to be broken up.

In this they succeeded. Only parliamentary parties made up the new government. Irujo, the new Minister of Public Welfare announced

that freedom of worship would be guaranteed; also that church property would be protected more vigilantly than before; the semi-official organization, Workers Patrols, in Catalonia would be liquidated; instead of collectivization, a municipal and state system of supervision would be introduced; the workers organizations should not exercise any control over public services. While these lines are being written an intensive struggle is being fought between the workers organizations which want to defend the achievements of July 19, 1936, and the political parties that constitute the new government.

The Spanish revolution has come to a crucial period in its development. The present government is only a temporary one. Will it be replaced by one further to the right or more to the left? The latter can only be realized through new struggles and perhaps not without revolutionary upheavals.

The CNT and UGT find themselves in opposition. But the UGT finds herself represented in the government through the Socialist and Communist Parties. The CNT-FAI do not agree with the present political line, but their position is one of watchful waiting. They are not giving up their revolutionary aims. The anti-fascist front is not as strong today as it was previously. After the events of July 19, 1936, the anti-fascist front embraced workers, bourgeoisie, and the republican parties of the Spanish people. Today, there is a regrouping of forces. On the one side, are all the political parties and on the other, the workers organizations, syndicates, trade unions and anarchists.

The fate of the Spanish revolution is not yet decided. If the workers organizations are not united, new inter-party conflict will be difficult to avoid. The present unity of the anti-fascist elements will last as long as the war. With the conclusion of the anti-fascist war, the Spanish proletariat will not be satisfied with a Republican capitalist system. Spain will have peace only when her hopes for a more just social system are realized.

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